Meeting of Indo-Pak Foreign Secretaries in Colombo

4196. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Indian and Pakistan Foreign Secretaries met at the third special session of the Standing Committee of the South Asian Associations for Regional Cooperation held in Colombo in August, 2001;

(b) if so, the details of discussion/outcome thereof; indicating whether talks were "constructive"; and

(c) whether Government have made it clear to Pakistan that the killings of innocent people in Jammu and Kashmir cannot be described as "JEHAD" and this must be stopped and that India was not impressed by Pakistan's assertion that it does not condone terrorism, does not admit to fomenting cross border terrorism in Jammu aand Kashmir ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH) : (a) to (c) The Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan met on 10th August 2001, on the sidelines of the Special Session of the Standing Committee of SAARC Foreign Secretaries held at Colombo (9-10 August 2001). During the meeting, Indian Foreign Secretary reiterated India's commitment to continue with the dialogue process initiated by Prime Minister. She also reiterated the acceptance of invitations extended to Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister to visit Pakistan. Dates for the visit will be fixed at mutual convenience through diplomatic channels.

Foreign Secretary further expressed the hope that the Pakistan authorities would facilitate the implementation of the CBMs announced by India on 4th, 6th and 9th July and take similar measures of their own; and that Pakistan would respond to the 6th July 2001 proposal for talks between the Directors General of Military Operations, as well as for an expert level official dialogue on neclear CBMs. It was suggested that there should be a follow-up to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on CBMs, which was signed by the Indian and Pakistani Foreign Secretaries at Lahore, in Februrary 1999.

The question of early release of civilian prisoners, avoidance of arrest of fishermen who inadvertently transgress and the issue of the 54 Indian POWs, was also brought up by Foreign Secretary.

The issue of cross broder terrorism was also raised. It was pointed out that the spurt in violence in Jammu & Kashmir following the Agra Summit had created in India an extremely negative sentiment both at the public and political levels. It could not be accepted that the violence in Jammu & Kashmir, with tis foreign mercenaries and generous assistance from abroad, is anything but cross-border terrorism. The daily killing of innocent men, women and childern cannot under any circumstance be glorified as "jehad" or as a political movement. India's resolve, strength and stamina to counter terrorism and violence until they were crushed was reiterated.

Foreign Secretary also stated India's commitment to establishing a relationship of peace, friendship and cooperation with Pakistan and reiterated India's overall approach to bilateral relations. It was made clear to the Pakistan side that there was no question of India accepting that Jammu & Kashmir was either the "core issue", or "central" to the normalization of bilateral ties. As emphasized by Prime Minister on numerous occasions, India's approach will be to improve relations, build trust and confidence, so that a conducive climate is created to resolve issues.

The Pakistan side indicated its desire to continue with the dialogue process.

Chinese Expansion in IT Sector

4197. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether India have a five year advantage over China in Information Technology due to the high quality of software input and training methodology;

(b) if so, whether China has also approached India for having Information Technology knowledge;

(c) if so, whether both countries have agreed to develop the Information Technology; and

(d) if so, the details of the agreement?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN) : (a) The Indian IT industry has not only grown in revenue terms, but also in terms of quality. In fact Quality has today become the hallmark of the Indian software industry. More than 200 companies have ISO 9000 certifications and out of the 50 companies in the world having SEI CMM Level 5, 27 are located in India.